

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY/DISTRICT
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
INTERNAL NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

Property/District Name: Witter-Mercer Farm Survey Number: F:3-148

Project: I-270/US 15 Multimodal Study, Montgomery and Frederick Co. Agency: SHA

Site visit by MHT Staff: ☒ no ☐ yes Name _____ Date _____

Eligibility recommended ☐ Eligibility not recommended ☒

Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☐ None

Justification for decision: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map)

The Witter-Mercer Farm is located in a largely rural area north of Frederick, in the vicinity of a small crossroads community called Harmony Grove. The abandoned property is situated on the east side of US 15 near its intersection with Hayward Road and encompasses eleven structures. The property is not considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Witter-Mercer Farm includes a main dwelling, agricultural buildings and associated domestic outbuildings, and dating to two main periods of construction, the late 19th century and the mid-20th century. The main dwelling, the bank barn and domestic outbuildings survive from the 19th century, while the remaining buildings (all agricultural) including a large dairy complex, are from this century. The main dwelling is a large, 2-1/2-story, four-bay frame structure with a two-story rear ell and a side wing addition. The house is built on rubble stone foundation, is covered with a gable roof and features two inside end chimneys. The interior is characterized by two large rooms in the main block with fireplaces on each end wall. An open staircase is located in the northeast corner. The house has been abandoned for a number of years and is in deteriorating condition.

The bankbarn is a large stone barn built into a hill on the north and covered with a gable roof. The barn has been extended on the south side with a large gambrel roofed addition, with walls constructed of concrete block and frame. A ca. 1950s silo is located immediately adjacent to the barn.

The property is a typical farm complex for the Piedmont area; the house itself is a relatively common dwelling form from the period, and the barn, though a good example of its type, has been significantly altered. The entire property is abandoned and in deteriorated condition. The complex no longer retains sufficient integrity of design, materials, feeling, and association to qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Documentation on the property/district is presented in: MHT Inventory Files

Prepared by: Rita Suffness, Cultural Resources Leader, SHA, MHT Form and DOE (1996).

Kimberly Prothro Williams
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

October 2, 1996
Date

NR program concurrence: ☒ yes ☐ no ☐ not applicable

[Signature]
Reviewer, NR program

10/2/96
Date

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA - HISTORIC CONTEXT

I. Geographic Region:

☐ Eastern Shore (all Eastern Shore counties, and Cecil)
☐ Western Shore (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles,
 Prince George's and St. Mary's)
☒ Piedmont (Baltimore City, Baltimore, Carroll,
 Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery)
☐ Western Maryland (Allegany, Garrett and Washington)

II. Chronological/Developmental Periods:

☐ Paleo-Indian 10000-7500 B.C.
☐ Early Archaic 7500-6000 B.C.
☐ Middle Archaic 6000-4000 B.C.
☐ Late Archaic 4000-2000 B.C.
☐ Early Woodland 2000-500 B.C.
☐ Middle Woodland 500 B.C. - A.D. 900
☐ Late Woodland/Archaic A.D. 900-1600
☐ Contact and Settlement A.D. 1570-1750
☐ Rural Agrarian Intensification A.D. 1680-1815
☐ Agricultural-Industrial Transition A.D. 1815-1870
☒ Industrial/Urban Dominance A.D. 1870-1930
☐ Modern Period A.D. 1930-Present
☐ Unknown Period (☐ prehistoric ☐ historic)

III. Prehistoric Period Themes:

☐ Subsistence
☐ Settlement
☐ Political
☐ Demographic
☐ Religion
☐ Technology
☐ Environmental Adaptation

IV. Historic Period Themes:

☐ Agriculture
☒ Architecture, Landscape Architecture,
 and Community Planning
☐ Economic (Commercial and Industrial)
☐ Government/Law
☐ Military
☐ Religion
☐ Social/Educational/Cultural
☐ Transportation

V. Resource Type:

Category: BuildingHistoric Environment: Rural

Historic Function(s) and Use(s): Domestic/Single Dwelling; Subsistence/Agriculture/Barn;
Loafing shed; feed shed and shop; chicken house; wagon shed/corncrib; equipment shed; milking
p a r l o r ; s m o k e h o u s e ; r o o t
cellar.

Known Design Source: _____

F-3-148
Witter-Mercer Farm
Frederick County

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont

Chronological/Developmental Period (s):
Industrial/Urban Dominance, A.D. 1870-1930
Modern Period, AD 1930-Present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s): Architecture/Agricultural

Resource Type:

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function (s) and Use (s):
Domestic/single dwelling/residence
Domestic/subsistence/smokehouse
Domestic/subsistence/root cellar
Agriculture/subsistence/outbuilding/barn
Agriculture/subsistence/drive through corncrib
Agriculture/subsistence/loafing barns
Agriculture/subsistence/milking parlor
Agriculture/subsistence/feed shed and machine shop
Agriculture/subsistence/chicken house

Known Design Source: None

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No.

F-3-148

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

DECEMBER 1983

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Witter-Mercer Farm

and/or common Mercer Farm

2. Location

street & number Trading Lane N/A not for publication

city, town Frederick ☒ vicinity of congressional district

state Maryland county

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Mr. Swanu Nathan

street & number 207 W. Seventh Street telephone no.: 301-694-5344

city, town Frederick state and zip code MD 21701

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Courthouse liber 1310

street & number folio 459

city, town Frederick state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title N/A

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

pository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. F-3-148

Condition

☐ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☒ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6

8. Significance

Survey No. F-3-148

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	ca. 1890	Builder/Architect	Unknown
check:	Applicable Criteria: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D		
	and/or		
	Applicable Exception: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G		
	Level of Significance: <input type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> local		

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET 8.1, 8.2

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. F-3-148

Land Records, Frederick County
Personal Interviews with Hilda Asherman

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of ^{inventoried} ~~annotated~~ property 93.93 acresQuadrangle name FrederickQuadrangle scale 1:24,000UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Tax Parcel

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rita Suffness, Leader, Cultural Resources Grouporganization MD State Hwy. Administration date April 16, 1996street & number 707 N. Calvert Street telephone 545-8561city or town Baltimore state Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

SEARCHED
SERIALIZED
INDEXED
FILED
APR 16 1996
FBI - BALTIMORE

F-3-148

Witter-Mercer Farm

Frederick County

Continuation Sheet 7.1

Description

The Witter-Mercer Farm is located in a largely rural area north of Frederick, in the vicinity of a small crossroads community called Harmony Grove. The abandoned property is situated on the east side of US 15 near its intersection with Hayward Road, an area subject to escalating pressure to develop as pockets of new housing development and industrial construction are occurring on the south, west and east sides. The farm has been vacant for some years as its owner continues to plan for its eventual development. The buildings are very deteriorated.

The Witter-Mercer Farm encompasses eleven structures, all relating to the property's domestic and agricultural use through the late nineteenth and into the mid-twentieth century. The complex is composed of a log and frame dwelling, a stone and timber-frame bank barn, a brick feedhouse connected to a frame machine shop, chicken house, wagon shed/corncrib, smokehouse, root cellar, two loafing sheds, silos and a concrete block/stone milking parlor and concrete block shed. The structures date from two major periods of construction, the late nineteenth century and mid-twentieth century, and represent the architecture and functional uses of their respective periods. The house, root cellar, smokehouse, wagon shed/corncrib, feed house and bank barn date from the late nineteenth century. The house is an example of a regional farmhouse form characterized by a front gable with a rear wing. The barn exemplifies the local use of a Pennsylvania German bank barn type. The remaining structures represent the second period of construction; they are constructed primarily of metal concrete block and frame. The dairy complex, ca. 1950 except for the bank barn, exemplifies the typical pattern of the era with a milking parlor, nearby silo and loafing barns.

The Witter-Mercer Farm is reached by means of a long curved drive which extends north from a newly constructed road (Trading Lane) to join the original egress to the farm from the west and US 15. The road skirts the north side of the domestic house complex, splits at the point just east of the wagon shed, with one arm continuing to the east to concrete block shed and loafing barn, then to the south to the immense loafing barn. The structures are largely arranged laterally from north to south along a farm road which parallels US 15 to the west.

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Witter-Mercer Farm
Frederick County**

**Continuation Sheet 7.2
Description**

The physical characteristics of the structures have been severely compromised by extensive deterioration. The house is open to the elements and is devoid of plaster work on the two levels of the main section. The root cellar and feed shed are partially collapsed, as is the east wall of the bank barn. All of the frame structures exhibit extreme deterioration. Although the land may be intermittently cultivated, none of the farm buildings are used. The complex does not retain integrity of workmanship, design and materials from the property's period of historic significance.

The following descriptions are keyed to the attached site plan.

House (ca. 1890) [1]

The main structure consists of two sections, roofed with standing seam metal, forming an L-shaped structure. The two-and-one half story gable-roofed front section faces US 15 on the west and contains the primary entrance. It is four bays wide on the principle (west) elevation with the doorway offset to the north. Sheathed with German siding, it features two-over-two lights, boxed cornice and return and cornerboards. Built on the rubblestone foundation, two chimneys, emerging at the peak are located inside of the north and south end walls. The interior of this main block, stripped of decorative trim, plaster and mantles, is characterized by two large rooms with stripped and closed brick fireplaces on each end wall. An open staircase is located in the northeast corner.

The three-bay long ell-wing, both sections of which appear to post-date the log wing, encompass summer and winter kitchens. The portion abutting the parlor with the stair and a full two stories in height, has steep, boxed winder stairs in the northeast corner and a secondary entrance via a small hipped roof porch on the north elevation. The gable roof overhang on the south side shelters a two-story open porch located in the angle formed by the junction of the main block and the ell. Access to the second level of the porch is provided by a centered door immediately above an entrance at the ground level.

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Witter-Mercer Farm
Frederick County**

**Continuation Sheet 7.3
Description**

Attached to the rear (or east) wall of the kitchen wing is a one-story gable roofed summer kitchen with entrances on both the south and east sides. Constructed at a later date than the ell or the main block, it has a tall chimney centered on the west wall which rises the full height of the two-story abutting section just off center and north of its gable roof peak. The simple large fireplace constructed of stuccocoed brick is centered on the west wall. One of the descendants of the Mercers, Hilda Asherman, recounts that this room originally had a cistern which fed a handpump used for laundry. This feature does not appear to be extant.

Loafing Shed (ca. 1950) [2]

Identified as a loafing shed by a descendent this building was constructed by Grayson Mercer, Jr. in 1950 after the older Mercers retired. It is a very large, one-story frame, metal sheathed structure composed of two blocks whose shed-rooves intersect to form a clerestory in the vertical strip between the two roof levels. Much of the corrugated metal and wood sheathing is missing. A horizontal band of windows is located at eye level on the west elevation (gable end).

Feed Shed (ca. 1890) and Shop (ca. 1950) [3]

Oriented east-west and located off the northeast corner of the house, this long structure is composed of two sections: the westernmost is a brick, shed roofed brick feed shed with a deteriorated window in the west elevation and an entrance offset to the west in the south face. A decorative feature (a soldier brick course), set in a dogtooth pattern is centered on the south wall five courses below a deteriorated notched wooden cornice. The garden bond pattern characterizing the brick work has five rows of stretcher courses between the header rows.

Attached to its east wall is a deeper, board and batten machine shed with five openings on the south elevation.

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Witter-Mercer Farm
Frederick County**

**Continuation Sheet 7.4
Description**

Chicken House, (ca. 1950) [4]

This large, one-story heavily deteriorated, largely board and batten structure is composed of two blocks whose shed rooves rise to two different levels creating a vertical clerestory area between them. There are large areas of metal sheathing and a partially destroyed corrugated metal roof.

Wagon Shed/Corncrib (ca. 1890) [5]

Located at the point where the farm access road turns to the south around the rear of the dwelling and the chicken house, this combination drive-through machine shed/corncrib is heavily deteriorated.

Bankbarn (ca. 1890) [6]

This large stone bank barn is built into a hill on the north where the earthen ramp gives access to the interior area through large wooden doors on strap hinges. The gable roof is corrugated metal oriented east-west, and the gable ends at the roof level are frame, resting on uncoursed rubble stone walls with vertical slits. The east wall has partially collapsed and the northeast corner has been re-constructed with concrete block. The barn has been extended on the south side with a large gambrel roofed addition, with walls constructed of concrete block and frame. A ca. 1950 silo is located immediately adjacent to the northwest corner.

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Witter-Mercer Farm
Frederick County**

**Continuation Sheet 7.5
Description**

Concrete Block Equipment Shed (ca. 1950) [7]

Located to the east of the Feed Shed/Machine Shop, this long low structure is open on the south side. The long frame roof is partially supported by heavy wooden members which demarcate the division of the interior into multiple bays.

Milking Parlor (ca. 1890 and 1950) [8]

The milking parlor is composed of a stone gable roofed western part which was extended to the east and south with concrete block additions. The upper level of the gable ends are sheathed with vertical board.

Loafing Shed and Silos (ca. 1950) [9]

This immense structure is located southeast of the dwelling at the end of the farm access road. The three original structures (two concrete silos and a two-story, metal sheathed, gable roofed block) were encompassed by large expanses of shed-roofed, one-story metal and frame sections.

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Witter-Mercer Farm
Frederick County**

**Continuation Sheet 7.6
Description**

Smokehouse (ca. 1890) [10]

The frame gable-roofed smokehouse is oriented north-south and is a few hundred feet south of the summer kitchen wing of the dwelling. Sheathed with metal roof and overlapping horizontal wood cladding with cornerboards, the interior has been sheathed with metal panels. It is in fairly good condition although used for trash disposal.

Root Cellar (ca. 1890) [11]

This round structure, with egress through a deteriorated opening on the south side, is an approximately four-foot diameter sphere constructed of corbelled brick which has been stuccoed.

F-3-148

Witter-Mercer Farm

Frederick County

Statement of Significance

Continuation Sheet 8.1

The Witter-Mercer Farm represents the typical Piedmont agricultural development in Frederick County around the turn of the century. The house is an example of the fully developed regional farmhouse type. Historically part of Tasker's Chance, a huge land grant encompassing much of Frederick County, the property was divided from the Cramer Farm in the 1880's as John Witter consolidated two purchases to form his roughly 122 acre farmstead. By the time he sold it to Israel DeLauter in 1923, who was the ancestor of the last owners to farm the property, (the Mercers) the property had been named "Mortality". Two major periods of construction are documented in the site. The first, ca. 1890, is represented by one half of the roughly dozen structures, including the house, corncrib, barn, smokehouse, feed shed and root cellar. The second period of construction, ca. 1950, the period of renewal when the son of the retiring owners built another half dozen structures, is represented by the loafing barns, silos, sheds, machine shop, etc.

The dwelling is representative of the typical regional farmhouse, characterized by gable end chimneys, gable roof, rear wing containing the kitchen and a two-story porch in the inner corner of the wing. In that the main block is constructed of log, it reflects the building traditions of the German settlers which was amalgamated with the Tidewater influences of the English settlers. The Witter-Mercer Farm, as recounted by a descendent of the Mercer's, was cultivated for corn and wheat as money crops. With the passage of the farm to second generation of Mercers the production shifted to dairying, which reflects the general trend occurring in Frederick County in the twentieth century. Around 1950 Grayson Mercer, Jr., began to modernize the farm to reflect the increased emphasis on dairying, doubling the number of structures to reflect this shift.

The complex was evaluated for those qualities of integrity and significance identified in the National Register of Historic Places criteria (36CFR60.4 [A-D]). The design and physical characteristics of the complex were analyzed for their

F-3-148

Witter-Mercer Farm

Frederick County

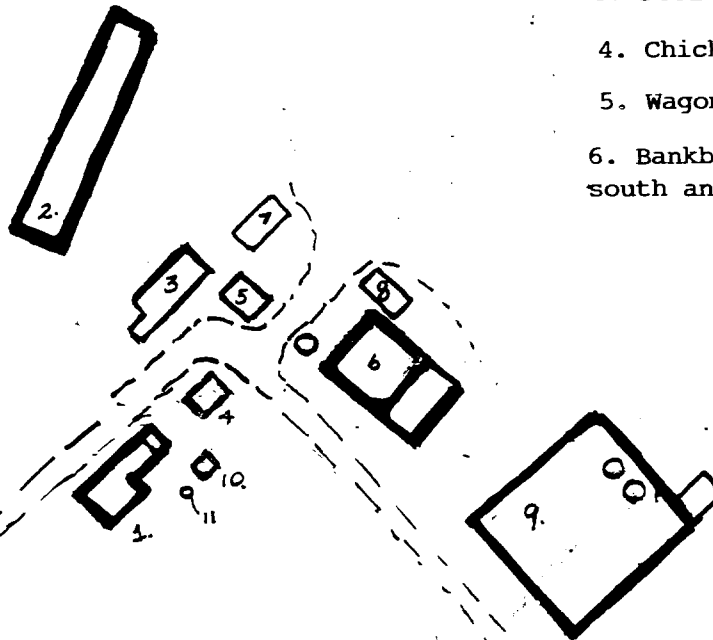
Statement of Significance

Continuation Sheet 8.2

potential local significance during the Industrial/Urban Dominance (AD 1870-1930) and the Modern Period (AD 1930-Present) in the areas of agriculture and architecture. In addition, research was undertaken to identify possible associations with historical events or persons significant on a local, state or national level.

Witter-Mercer Farm
F-3-148

1. Dwelling
2. Loafing Shed
(ca. 1955)
3. Feed Shed, Shop
4. Chicken House
5. Wagon Shed/Corncrib
6. Bankbarn (Extension on
south and Silo built ca. 1955)



7. Concret block Equipment
Shed (ca. 1955)

8. Milking Parlor
(ca. 1890 with ca. 1955 ext.)

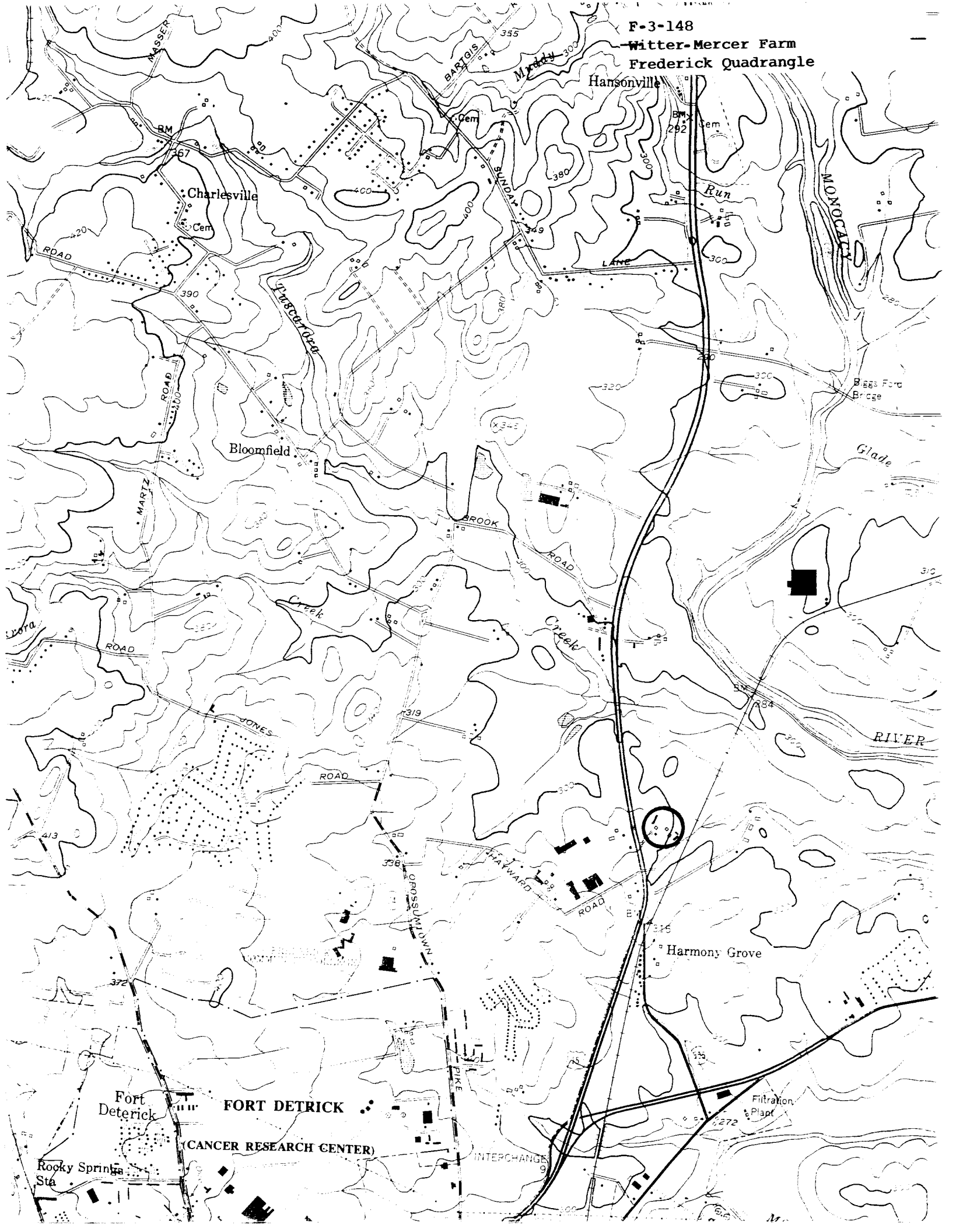
9. Loafing Shed and Silos
(ca. 1955)

10. Smokehouse

11. Root Cellar

F-3-148

Witter-Mercer Farm
Frederick Quadrangle





F-3-148

Witter-Merces Farm

Frederick County MD

Rita Suttner

3/96

neg at MD state Highway, Nelson

Overall view of farm looking
east

1/10



E-3-148

Witten-Mercer Farm
Frederick County MD

Rita Suffern

3/96

Neg at MD. State Hist. Soc. Admin.

Dwelling (i)

West (Entrance) Facade

2/10



F-3 - 148

Wittler-Mercer Farm

Frederick County MD

2nd Sufferer

3/96

neg at MD State Highway, below

Dwelling

SW Corner

3/10



F-3 -144

Witter - Mercer Farm

Frederick County Md

Rita Suttner

3/4 6

May at 1112 State Hwy Admin
Dwelling

SE Corner

4/10



E-3-148

Witter - Mercer Farm
Frederick County, MD

Rita Suttman

3/96

Weg at MD. State Hwy Admin.
Dwelling

NE Corner

\$/10



F. 3 - 148

Witter-Mercer Farm

Frederick County M. D.

Rita Suttner

3/9 L

neg at M.D. State Archives
Admin.

Dwelling,

South elevation

8/10



F. 3-148

W. Her - Mercers Farm
Frederick County (11-1)

R. to Suff. am

3/96

W. G. at MD State Highway
Administration

Feedhouse / Shop

NW corner

11/10



E-3-144

Witter - Mercer Farm
Frederick County MD

Rita Sutton

3/9/6

near at MD State

Highway

at intersection

Church house, new corner (foreground)
Bank barn in background

8/10



F-3 - 148

Witter-Mercer Farm

Frederick County, MD

Rt. 66 Farm

3196

Near MD State Highway
Admin

Loofing, Shenandoah West entrance -

9110



F-3-148

Witter - Mercer Farm

Fredenich County MD

Rita Suttner

3/46

recd at MD. State Hwy
Administration

Bank barn, S.W. Corner

10/10